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CPYRGHT New Spy At 'Control'

A few eyebrows were raised when President Johnson appointed old Texas friend Admiral William Raborn to head the Central Intelligence Agency a year ago. The quizzical expressions now appear warranted in light of the admiral's resignation as the nation's top spy.

Rumors have cropped up frequently about dissension in the CIA ranks. The complaints ranged from underlings' unhappiness with Raborn's "old salt" approach to running the super-secret spy ship to his ignorance of world affairs. One anonymous lieutenant told a newsmen not long ago that Raborn didn't know an oligarchy from a benevolent despot — that it was impossible to deal with foreign countries unless you knew a great deal about them.

In this context the appointment of CIA career man Richard Helms to replace Raborn should be a happy one all-around. Indeed, colleagues of Helms were quick to praise the President's choice. Helms is a former United Press International reporter, a Phi Beta Kappa, and has served in intelligence since he joined the Navy in World War II. After serving with the War Department's Strategic Services Unit, he went with the Central Intelligence Group which was formed in 1947.

Helms believes — and no doubt his colleagues share his view — that a lot of the criticism aimed at the CIA has been unfair, that on the whole the agency has done a good job over the years. Because

of the cloak-and-dagger operations of the spy outfit, the general public can only hope their faith is justified. The reason is simple: only the CIA and a few Congressmen and Senators know of the organization's successes. These successes, for obvious reasons, are not hailed to the skies. As for failures, they rise to the surface in a variety of ways, causing all sorts of embarrassment.

When the celebrated invasion of Cuba failed during the Kennedy Administration, the CIA shared scapegoat privileges with Adlai Stevenson and other Presidential advisers who backed away from U. S. air support of the operation. Intelligence operatives at that time assured the invaders that the rank-and-file Cubans would rise to join them and throw off the bearded tyrant, Castro. We all remember the Bay of Pigs. The CIA took its lumps then, and serious questions arose about its efficiency.

A more recent example of blatant exposure that caused the CIA, the U. S. government, and the academic world acute embarrassment was the University of Michigan's brief involvement with clandestine government operations in South Viet Nam. The university officials patched up some of the damage by confessing that they acted as a front unwittingly for certain guerrilla operations but that once the facts were known, severed all connections with them.

The position of the Michigan people was obvious. If they, as re-

search scholars in a friendly country, were exposed as knowing participants in spy activities, then all academic work being performed by Americans in dozens of have-not countries might be placed in jeopardy.

When Admiral Raborn took over, he closed the CIA's public affairs office, his point being that the spy agency had no public affairs. This has been true, for the most part. The U. S. government has never been eager to broadcast either the failures or successes of the agency. Even the money appropriated for the CIA is wrapped in omnibus measures, carefully camouflaged. Unhappy congressmen, the press, or angry government officials in foreign countries have been the main sources of CIA lid-opening. In the first two instances the question has been: why did this happen? In the latter: Doesn't Yankee meddling show clearly American imperialist designs? The CIA is silent or cryptic as possible in the face of either eventuality.

It will be interesting to see if Raborn tells all about his tenure of office. We assume that he will not. Any 'inside' report will likely come from columnists who have valuable contacts in spy circles — and even they will remain anonymous.

What is important now, however, is to get on with the necessary business of spying. Mr. Helms should bring a fresh impetus to a government agency that for good reason or not hasn't been happy with things at "control." Agents and the spy hierarchy shouldn't have any trouble in communicating with the new boss. He is one of them.